



Republic of the Philippines

Senate

OFFICE OF SENATOR LEILA M. DE LIMA

STOP THE KILLINGS!

Message for the Global Day of Action on the Philippines

The Philippines is in a maelstrom of multiple and unprecedented crises. A pandemic still ravages the health and wellbeing of this nation of more than 100 million; a recession shatters tens of millions of jobs and businesses; while an abysmally inept and morally bankrupt leadership presides over a country whose last few vestiges of democracy and responsible governance have been massively corroding.

But, the catastrophe that has been always been with us since Day 1 when Rodrigo Duterte took power as President is the human rights calamity, the worst of its kind in Philippine history. It is prevalent as it is persistent, and it devours the very soul of our nation, disregarding the very dignity and worth of every human person, and obliterating the Filipino's sacred ideals and traditions of due process and equality before the law.

With no let-up for more than four (4) years now, extrajudicial killings under Duterte's so-called "war on drugs" continue unabated. In her June 2020 report to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), the High Commissioner for Human Rights found that these killings were indeed widespread and systematic, and that at least 8,663 mostly poor Filipinos had been killed, with other estimates, including that from the Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR), of more than triple that number.

Under this climate of impunity, attacks against human rights defenders and critics of the government – activists, journalists, members of groups associated with the political left, and leaders of the opposition, the churches, trade unions, indigenous peoples and peasant groups – have been frequent and rampant, as well. The High Commissioner "*verified the killings of 208 human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists, including 30 women*". Just last month, in separate incidents, assailants brutally murdered Zara Alvarez, a paralegal for the human rights group Karapatan, and Randall Echanis, a leader of the peasant group Anakpawis and a seasoned activist.

Given the magnitude and relentlessness of the killings and other gross human rights violations, the High Commissioner, the CHR, a number of UN Special Rapporteurs, and many civil society organizations have been urging the UNHRC to establish an on-the-ground independent and impartial investigation into human rights abuses in the country. The experts have likewise appealed to the International Criminal Court (ICC) to “*expedite and prioritize the completion of its preliminary examination of the situation in the Philippines.*”

I join the call for an UNHRC-led investigation, and for expedited ICC process. I likewise appeal to different governments across the globe to immediately impose targeted sanctions (such as those provided by the Global Magnitsky Act and similar penalties) against abusive and corrupt Philippine government officials, and come to the aid of the Filipino people, who have long been brutalized, terrorized and abused by Duterte, his co-conspirators and accomplices.

In the absence of domestic accountability, I pray that global instruments of justice will commence the task of exacting criminal and moral responsibilities, ensuring redress for the victims and their families, and signaling a definite end to the mass atrocities.

In the face of a disabled national government, I hope for an ever growing and unstoppable network of individuals, groups and peoples in the Philippines and abroad who are bound by solidarity and a collective struggle for common humanity and the dignity of the Filipino.

#StopTheKillingsPH #EndImpunityNow #InvestigateDuterte


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Philippines and a Prisoner
of Conscience
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